

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION LAB-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 NSAE-00 SIL-01 L-03 /046 W

-----240344Z 015769 /13

R 231125Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7339

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1782

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PLAB, ILO

SUBJ: ILO-63RD INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE

REF: (A) STATE 102699; (B) STATE 103403

1. AMBASSADOR AND LABOFF CALLED ON LABOR MINISTER MICHAEL SIRIWARDENA MAY 19 TO MAKE THE DEMARCHE REQUESTED REFTELS. AMBASSADOR SUMMARIZED THE PROBLEMS USG HAS HAD WITH THE DIRECTION OF THE ILO AND MENTIONED THAT WE HAD BEEN HEARTENED BY SOME RECENT ILO DECISIONS AND DISCOURAGED BY OTHERS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. HOPED IT WOULD NOT HAVE TO WITHDRAW BUT THAT THE FINAL DECISION WOULD BE MADE ONLY AFTER THE UPCOMING CONFERENCE. HE THEN EXPLAINED THE U.S. POSITION ON THE CRITICAL ISSUES AS OUTLINED IN REFTELS. LABOR MINISTER (WHO WAS OUT OF TOWN AT THE TIME OF HOROWITZ VISIT) DID NOT COMMENT ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES BUT PREFERRED INSTEAD TO RECALL IN GENERAL FASHION SOME BENEFITS SRI LANKA HAD RECEIVED FROM THE ILO, E.G., THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAST ASIAN LABOR MINISTERS CONFERENCE IN TEHRAN FOR THE GSL PROGRAM OF EXPORTING SKILLED LABOR.

2. THE MINISTER DOES NOT FOLLOW ILO MATTERS CLOSELY AND WILL NOT BE ATTENDING JUNE CONFERENCE. THE SECRETARY TO THE LABOR

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MINISTRY LAKSHMAN DE MEL WILL BE THE CHIEF GOVERNMENT DELEGATE. HE ARRIVED LATE FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH HIS MINISTER BECAUSE OF A LAST-MINUTE SCHEDULE CHANGE AND THEREFORE MISSED THE THOROUGH EXPOSITION OF ISSUES. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR ASKED HIM FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTS FOR THE U.S. AT THE ILO, DE MEL RESPONDED THAT IT HAD BEEN HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOVERNING BODY RESULTS HAD BEEN GENERALLY FAVORABLE

TO THE U.S. BECAUSE OF SOME FORM OF SECRET VOTING. HE SAID THAT IF A SIMILAR TACTIC COULD BE USED AT THE JUNE CONFERENCE, THE USG POSITIONS WOULD HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF ADOPTION. THIS SEEMED TO REFER TO PRESSURE APPLIED TO COUNTRIES LIKE SRI LANKA TO VOTE WITH ARAB, NON-ALIGNED, OR OTHER BLOCS.

3. BESIDES DE MEL, THE OTHER GOVERNMENT DELEGATES TO THE CONFERENCE WILL BE GSL REPRESENTATIVES IN GENEVA, SUSANTA DE ALWIS AND K. K. BRECKINRIDGE. EMPLOYERS' DELEGATE WILL BE C. P. DE SILVA, CHAIRMAN OF THE EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION. THE WORKERS' SLOT HAS BEEN DIVIDED INTO TWO FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS. S. THONDAMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE CEYLON WORKERS CONGRESS (CWC), WAS APPOINTED DELEGATE AND S. ALAVI MOWLANA, JOINT SECRETARY OF THE SRI LANKA INDEPENDENT TRADE UNION FEDERATION, WAS NAMED ADVISER.

4. HOWEVER, BOTH OF THE WORKERS' DELEGATES ARE ALSO POLITICIANS AND WILL BE RUNNING FOR THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY AT THE JULY 21 GENERAL ELECTION. THONDAMAN ALSO HAS PROBLEMS WITHIN HIS UNION AND TOLD LABOFF HE WOULD "ALMOST CERTAINLY" NOT BE GOING TO THE CONFERENCE (ALTHOUGH HE MAY TRY TO FIT IN TWO DAYS AT THE GOVERNING BODY). MOWLANA SAYS HE WILL DECIDE WITHIN A DAY OR SO WHETHER HE HAS THE TIME TO GO. THONDAMAN OR ANOTHER CHOICE FROM THE CWC WOULD BE A PROBABLE VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE USG POSITIONS. MOWLANA, WHOSE UNION IS AFFILIATED TO THE WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, IS MUCH MORE DOUBTFUL; LABOFF HAS APPOINTMENT TO DISCUSS ISSUES WITH HIM THIS WEEK AND WILL REPORT IF HE DECIDES TO ATTEND.

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5. SUBSEQUENT CABLE WILL REPORT TALK WITH C. P. DE SILVA AND POSSIBLY FURTHER REACTION FROM LABOR MINISTRY.
REED

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Executive Order: GS
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